The MIDNITE SOFTWARE GAZETTE

Includes The PAPER

Happy New Year, readers! (Huxley wasn't entirely right about 1984, praise the Lord!) **The enclosed book is issue 16 of your subscription to the Midnite Software Gazette.** We hope you'll find it a useful reference, and thank **Consumer's Guide** and the leaders of 100 U.S. **Commodore user groups** for making it possible. If you or others would like extra copies, you may buy them for $5 on the bargain book table at B. Dalton Bookseller or at Waldenbooks.

A few small caveats need to be made about the book. In the Midnite, reviews are always the opinion of the person listed as reviewer. In the book, the reviews and ratings are the product of many hands. Ellen and I wrote all the reviews but incorporated the best thoughts of our volunteer Midnite reviewers. Then everything we said was heavily edited by the Editors of Consumer Guide. They also checked all stated facts with the companies involved, in a strenuous effort to guarantee accuracy. At times this was impossible -- companies whose manuals clearly disclaim all warranties, insisted to C.G. that they do too guarantee their wares. Some also spoke of as-yet unreleased versions of products -- well, you get the picture. If C.G. had trouble verifying information on a product, it was omitted, regardless of quality. However, one aspect remained utterly intact. Nearly every product on the market on or before October 15, 1983 was considered for the book. **Those not included were, in the great majority of cases, omitted intentionally,** usually because the user groups rejected them. Those omitted include several of the most heavily-touted products of our day.

In an industry changing as quickly as this one, even a book rushed to print less than two months after its manuscript was completed can seem out of date. In a recent visit to Micro-PACE computers, **I counted 40 new products we have not yet reviewed in Midnite.** It will always be this way, I suppose, and thus there will always be a next issue in which to cover them.

Since this is expected to become an annual book, **we would be glad to hear from readers** with new candidates for the top 200, and deeper insights about those already selected. That there are already 200 recommendable products available for the 64 and VIC (and thousands of less recommendable ones) in little over a year, says a great deal about the popularity of Commodore's current computers. The often-claimed software gap between Apple and Commodore is now virtually nonexistent. Most of the really big sellers for Apple are now out for the 64, too.

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Quick Notes: (to fill in the readers and fill out the sheet!)

JO's off-the-wall comments about a new 256K Commodore computer last time turned out to be a bit prophetic. **At the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, Jack Tramiel is definitely expected to announce TED,** (remember TED from last issue?) It will reportedly be more compatible with the 64 than the ill-starred "P128", and much more powerful than when first planned. According to usually-knowledgeable rumors, **this $350 machine will feature 128K of RAM and 64K of ROM, including a Magic Desk-like word processor and spreadsheet program, and possibly an 80 column adapter.** It will even have ten commercial program packages immediately available for it (a switch for Commodore)! Other sources are referring to it as the **"Commodore 444"**, but both are apparently the same machine. From here on, things are less sure. Commodore recently announced an agreement to use a version of Unix based on the Z8000 true 16-bit microprocessor in a forthcoming model, of which 6 are reportedly now planned. One of those may be a dirt-cheap VIC II, and another the above-mentioned (and long-since announced) B128 with an add-on 8088 and MS-DOS. **Ignore rumors that the 64 will soon be discontinued.** They seem to be coming from "mostly-Apple" software houses, such as Broderbund, that were told about TED and drew the wrong conclusions. On the other hand, how does $80 retail by March sound?

The second annual Lincoln College$_4$ Commodore Computer Camp for adults and students, better known as LC^4 (or Commodore Heaven), is all set for this summer. As in its first year, which drew rave reviews from everyone, the leadership includes Jim Butterfield, Jim & Ellen Strasma, Dick Immers, and Debra Landre, plus Loren Wright of Micro magazine, with help from Keith Peterson and Len Lindsay. The dates this year will be July 8-14, and the tuition $250. Topics include 2 levels of BASIC, 3 levels of machine language, 3 levels of disk handling, 2 levels of graphics, hardware and more! Registration is limited to 75, so don't plan on getting in at the last minute! The camp is **featured in an excellent article in the current issue of Commodore magazine.** For more information, write: Continuing Education, Lincoln College, Lincoln IL 62656.

After all this good news, I also have to warn you **Midnite 17 (February-March '84) may not appear until March.** We have much of it already prepared, but will be writing for Time-Life Books until mid-January. Articles, reviews, products and ads should still be here by early January; we'll not wait for anything once we begin.

Finally, we are now testing a product too good to leave unmentioned. "Flexidraw" is, for my money, the best drawing program around. Yes, I remember saying the same about Doodle recently, and yes I've heard of the Koala Pad. Being best doesn't mean it's for everyone, but if you know how to draw you'll love Flexidraw. It has most of Doodle's features, but instead of being controlled by a joystick, it uses the most accurate lite pen I've ever seen. Even signatures come out legibly! Unfortunately, it costs $150 including the pen, but if you need a high-quality graphic input device, and can draw, nothing beats Flexidraw! It's from Inkwell Systems, 7760 Vickers St., San Diego CA 92138 (619) 268-8792.

And now, on to the book...